

Portfolio Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mohon Ali
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

This report provides an update on the main activity since the last Council meeting relating to portfolio responsibilities.

Quality of Education

Over the last month it has been a real pleasure to visit our colleges and schools as our young people have been receiving the results of their GCSEs, A levels, T levels, and other qualifications. I congratulate Oldham's young people for the determination and resilience they have shown during the period of time that they have been studying for their qualifications, and I am extremely proud of what they have all achieved. I extend my thanks to all the school and college staff for all the work they do in aiding Oldham's young people to realise their ambitions. I also wish to thank all parents and carers for the support they provide.

I am pleased to report that Ofsted inspection outcomes for Oldham's primary schools show even further improvement, with 93% of schools now rated Good or Outstanding, surpassing the national average of 92%. This is the highest figure ever for Oldham. I am also pleased to say that inspection outcomes for secondary schools have also shown significant improvement with now 61.5% rated Good or Outstanding (an increase from below 50% earlier in the year.) I am hopeful that over the next school year we will continue to see improved inspection outcomes in the secondary sector.

School Attendance

Along with the Mayor and Council Leader, I will be welcoming Dame Rachel D'Souza (the Children's Commissioner) to Oldham on 4 September. She will initially visit the Brian Clarke Academy to see the outstanding work they do in their community to ensure high levels of school attendance. She will then be welcomed to the Mayor's parlour where she has specifically asked to see Oldham's innovative work on maximising school attendance. This is work that she has become aware of through the Greater Manchester Attendance Action Alliance (that she chairs.)

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

It is now a year since the joint Ofsted/Care Quality Commission inspection of the Oldham area SEND partnership. I am pleased to report that since the inspection the partnership has made improvements across the areas identified by the inspection team. Oldham's statutory performance in the timeliness of education, health and care plans is significantly above the national average. This is despite continued increases in the number of children with EHCPs: 6.0% of children in Oldham have an EHCP, higher than the national average of 4.3%.

As we enter the new academic year, I am delighted to report that our schools will be able to access a range of new sources of support for their young people with SEND. Through the support of the Department for Education and NHS England, we have been able to recruit a range of new staff that will be able to support schools and families across a range of areas such as early language support, preparation for adulthood, and early access to mediation. My thanks goes to

our partners in POINT who, as always, continue to provide outstanding support to parents and carers of children with SEND.

Virtual School

The number of children under the supervision of the Virtual School has slightly increased from 410 to 418. The Virtual School team remains deeply involved in supporting several complex cases, particularly where children are at risk of permanent exclusion. The team continues to offer valuable support through initiatives such as drop-ins for social workers, networks for Designated School Leads, the Year 6 transition programme, the Reading Heroes initiative, and the Stars in Our Eyes celebration. Upcoming activities include a residential at Manchester University and the Eton 'Skills for Success' Summer School.

Music Service

Our Youth Brass Band has once again brought pride to Oldham, winning both the Best Youth Band and the Audience Vote prizes at the Bold as Brass contest. Additionally, pupils joined in the Greater Manchester "Singing Challenge" and performed with the Youth Wind Ensemble at the Saddleworth Sing for Pleasure concert, showcasing their talents and representing our borough with distinction.

Careers

On 24 September Oldham Council will be hosting our second annual young people's career event. The target audience will be 15-25-year-olds and they will be able to access impartial information, advice and guidance provided by the National Careers Service and Positive Steps. All secondary schools and colleges in Oldham have been invited and we are expecting over 400 young people to attend. Over 40 companies will be showcasing employment opportunities. As a Council we are proud to be making this investment into the career opportunities available to our young people.

Empower Oldham

On an associated note, I can also report that funding for the Empower Oldham programme has been extended until September 2025. The programme will continue to focus on ensuring all young people from age 16 are in employment, education or training. There is also additional funding proposed to support young people at risk of disengagement through a partnership with Oldham College.

Lifelong Learning

Our Lifelong Learning Service continues to excel, with 2,244 residents enrolled and a 97% pass rate, keeping us on track to meet our annual targets. We recently celebrated the achievements of our learners at a special event on 16 July, recognising local, regional, and national award winners.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.